



## Cultural adaptation, compounding vulnerabilities and conjunctures in Norse Greenland

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### Abstract:

Norse Greenland has been seen as a classic case of maladaptation by an inflexible temperate zone society extending into the arctic and collapse driven by climate change. This paper, however, recognizes the successful arctic adaptation achieved in Norse Greenland and argues that, although climate change had impacts, the end of Norse settlement can only be truly understood as a complex socioenvironmental system that includes local and interregional interactions operating at different geographic and temporal scales and recognizes the cultural limits to adaptation of traditional ecological knowledge. This paper is not focused on a single discovery and its implications, an approach that can encourage monocausal and environmentally deterministic emphasis to explanation, but it is the product of sustained international interdisciplinary investigations in Greenland and the rest of the North Atlantic. It is based on data acquisitions, reinterpretation of established knowledge, and a somewhat different philosophical approach to the question of collapse. We argue that the Norse Greenlanders created a flexible and successful subsistence system that responded effectively to major environmental challenges but probably fell victim to a combination of conjunctures of large-scale historic processes and vulnerabilities created by their successful prior response to climate change. Their failure was an inability to anticipate an unknowable future, an inability to broaden their traditional ecological knowledge base, and a case of being too specialized, too small, and too isolated to be able to capitalize on and compete in the new protoworld system extending into the North Atlantic in the early 15th century.

**Source:** <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3309771>

### Resource Description

#### Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Extreme Weather Event, Human Conflict/Displacement, Sea Level Rise, Temperature

**Extreme Weather Event:** Landslides

**Temperature:** Fluctuations

#### Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

# Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Arctic

## **Geographic Location:**

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

**Non-United States:** Non-U.S. North America

## **Health Impact:**

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Health Outcome Unspecified

## **Mitigation/Adaptation:**

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

## **Resource Type:**

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

## **Resilience:**

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

A focus of content

## **Timescale:**

time period studied

Historical